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COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO

department of general services

COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER • SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA 93408 • (805) 781-5200

DUANE P. LEIB, DIRECTOR

TO: PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: JAN DI LEO, PARKS PLANNER, DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES

DATE: JULY 13, 2006

SUBJECT: COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO - GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT TO
UPDATE THE RECREATION ELEMENT (LRP2005-00015)

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: DRAFT EIR, AVAILABLE APRIL 21, 2006
FINAL EIR, AVAILABLE JULY 13, 2006

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

1. Start the formal review of the 2006 Planning Commission Public Hearing Draft Parks and Recreation Element (PRE).
2. Receive staff's presentation on the body of the Element.¹
3. Receive public comment on the 2006 Planning Commission Public Hearing Draft PRE.
4. Receive the project's Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR).
5. Provide direction regarding changes to the 2006 Planning Commission Public Hearing Draft PRE.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Parks and Recreation Element (PRE) provides a twenty year vision for parks and recreation within San Luis Obispo County's unincorporated areas. The 2006 PRE would update and replace the 1968 Recreation Element, the 1988 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the 1991 Trails Plan, and portions of the 1992 Natural Area Plan. Adoption of the PRE would also result in amendments to the County's Framework for Planning, the Agriculture and Open Space Element, various Area Plans and Title 22 as they relate to parks and recreation. The PRE proposes policies and programs to acquire, develop and maintain parks, recreation and special places within San Luis Obispo County.

PROJECT HISTORY

The following Board-adopted SLO County plans currently guide the acquisition and development of parks and recreation: (1) 1968 Recreation Element, (2) 1988 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, (3) 1991 Trails Plan, and (4) 1992 Natural Areas Plan.

Efforts to update the 1968 Recreation Element started in roughly 1994. At that time, County Parks initiated public workshops countywide to obtain community input. These workshops resulted in a 1996 Public Review Draft PRE prepared by the County's Parks and Planning staff. This document was taken to additional public workshops for comments and input and eventually to the Parks and Recreation Commission at public hearings. In general the 1996 Element was well received by the public and the Parks Commission. The major comment the County received was the Element should

¹ The Project List (Appendix A) will be discussed in more detail at a future hearing.

be made more user friendly. Due to other staff commitments in both Parks and the Planning Department, the Element Update languished.

In 2000, County Parks hired a consultant (Sara Kocher) to map the projects listed in the 1996 PRE as well as other relevant public lands. In addition, Crawford Multari & Clark Associates (CMCA) was retained to prepare an updated PRE. After working with a Parks and Recreation Element Team and preparing more than one administrative draft, CMCA produced the November 2003 Public Review Draft PRE. Throughout a large portion of 2004, County Parks, CMCA, and members of the Parks and Recreation Commission attended noticed workshops to obtain public input on the 2003 Draft PRE. In late 2004 through late 2005, the Parks and Recreation Commission reviewed the 2003 PRE at noticed, public meetings. The Park and Recreation Commission's comments and public input resulted in the 2006 Planning Commission Hearing Draft PRE.

It is noted, the 2006 PRE is a completely different document than the 1968 Recreation Element. Therefore, rather than updating that 38-year-old document, the 2006 Draft PRE incorporates relevant portions of the 1988 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the 1991 Trails Plan, and 1992 Natural Areas Plan.

The 2006 Draft PRE also recognizes the fiscal constraints placed on all levels of government. Budget shortfalls at the Federal, State and local level have made it difficult to fund existing programs let alone add new services, infrastructure, and/or facilities. In fact, the Parks program is currently constrained in regards to new park and recreation acquisitions and development. A 2005 Grand Jury report criticized the County for adding new fiscal burdens to the park system citing that there is not sufficient funding to properly maintain the existing facilities and programs. As a response to that report, in June 2005 the Board of Supervisors determined that *new or expanded facilities are not being recommended unless a source of operating funding is identified*. This was adopted as a formal policy by the Board of Supervisors.

Subsequently, the Board has directed the County Parks and Recreation Commission to form a Task Force of community members to investigate the Grand Jury report and evaluate their findings and recommendations. That Task Force is composed of representatives from education, finance, the building industry, agriculture, law enforcement, business, the medical community, and other parts of the countywide community. While it has held an initial meeting, its findings and recommendations are still undetermined. However, the Parks Commission will ultimately forward to the Board of Supervisors comments and recommendations based on the work of the Task Force.

PROPOSED REVIEW SCHEDULE

On June 8, 2006, the Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission held a joint study session on the 2006 PRE. This study session allowed: Parks staff to provide background on the project, the Parks and Recreation Commission to dialogue with the Planning Commission, and public input on the PRE and the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR).

The Planning Commission is scheduled to review the 2006 Planning Commission Hearing Draft PRE and the project's FEIR throughout July and August 2006. In order to efficiently use the Commission's time and to transmit the Planning Commission's recommendations on the Element to the Board by the end of this year, Parks staff is suggesting the following review format:

- ☐ July 13, 2006 - Review Body of Element
- ☐ July 27, 2006 - Continued Review of the Body of Element and Review the FEIR
- ☐ August 10, 2006 - Review Table A (Projects)
- ☐ August 24, 2006 - Wrap-Up and Recommendation to the Board of Supervisors

If the Commission needs more time than the four meetings noted above, Parks staff will arrange for additional PRE hearings in September 2006. In addition, staff will notice the public when the project portion of the Element is planned for Commission review. The PRE Project List and associated maps have been the primary area of public interest.

In terms of review guidelines, staff is suggesting that:

1. *Grammar and spelling corrections be sent to staff under a separate cover.* Thus, if possible, the Commission could provide grammatical and spelling corrections via email, copied pages out of the element, or a memo to staff. Staff will then display these items as an exhibit at the public hearings to verify that suggested changes have been received and noted.
2. *Individual Commissioners pull items for discussion.* During the Parks and Recreation Commission's review of the PRE, a Commissioner simply pulled items s/he wished to discuss versus going through the document page by page. For example, each Commissioner was given a chance to indicate specific items or pages that should be pulled for more discussion.² For those items pulled, if a discussion became lengthy, a straw poll was taken to determine if a majority of the Commission supported changes to that section. If there was no majority, then that item was dropped and the next section that had been pulled by a Commissioner was then discussed. If a Commission majority indicated a change was necessary to a section, the issue was clarified and staff was directed to come back with changes or clarifications at a later time rather than attempting to word-smith the document on the spot. The Planning Commission may want to consider a similar review methodology.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

The 2006 PRE has seven chapters and six appendices as follows:

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Parks
- Chapter 3: Recreation
- Chapter 4: Special Places and Uses
- Chapter 5: Choosing Parks and Recreation
- Chapter 6: Funding and Maintenance
- Chapter 7: Definitions
- Appendix A: Project List
- Appendix B: California Recreational Use Statute
- Appendix C: Trail Standards
- Appendix D: Funding Sources
- Appendix E: Capital Project Rating Criteria for San Luis Obispo County Parks
- Appendix F: Consolidated Goals, Objectives and Policies.

² The pulled item could be a comment, a question, and./or a proposed change.

See Tables 1 and 2 attached to this staff report for a further discussion of the intent and fundamental issues associated with that chapter.

PROPOSED CHANGES

Text Changes. As review progresses, some Element changes are expected. Staff will keep a log of proposed changes. An example is attached as Exhibit A. This will allow the Commission to easily see what items have been addressed and changed. Initially staff is recommending the following changes:

1. Moving the Project List (Appendix A) into the body of the Element. Appendix A would be changed to Chapter 8. This would make the Project List part of the Element versus simply an appendix.
2. Reference Chapter 8 versus Appendix A when referencing the Project List.
3. Adding wording how changes are made to the Element.
4. Correcting the Project List in various locations. This item will be addressed in more detail prior to the Project List hearing in August.

Map Changes. The following map changes are suggested:

1. Map the Coastal Trail (already identified in Appendix A)
2. Discuss the trails proposed for removal by the Parks and Recreation Commission. Determine the Commission's recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. This will occur in more detail at the Commission's August hearing - when the project list is discussed.

MAJOR ISSUES

Three issues have been raised consistently at the various PRE public hearings. These issues are as follows:

1. Funding. As mentioned earlier, Federal, State and local budgets have been tenuous the past few years. Even in good budget years, park and recreation programs must compete with other essential public services such as fire and sheriff. County Parks has been aggressive and successful in obtaining grants as well as joint use agreements. This has assisted us in maintaining and providing some new parkland and recreation; however, maintenance of existing and proposed new facilities continues to be the larger issue. This problem is not unique to SLO County Parks, but rather is a concern throughout California and the nation. Chapter 6 (Funding & Maintenance) attempts to address this issue.
2. A fair distribution of projects. San Luis Obispo County has many unincorporated communities. It is important that each community get their fair share of park and recreation facilities and programs. Chapter 5 (Choosing Parks and Recreation) provides a mechanism to provide an equitable share of projects countywide.
3. Balancing Agriculture with Public Access. During the Park and Recreation Commission's review of the 2003 Draft PRE the issue of trails through lands zoned Agriculture was intensely discussed. Due to agriculturist's concerns, the County formed an AG/Trail Team to determine how the issues raised could be resolved. Input from this team, both trail proponents and agricultural interests, helped County Parks and the Agricultural Commissioner's Office come up with refined trail language that provided for trails with new *urban* development while not requiring new trails in agricultural areas.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

A Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) was prepared for the project and released for public review on April 21, 2006. The deadline for comments on the DEIR was June 16, 2006, 5:00 pm. The issues addressed in the DEIR include: consistency with locally adopted plans and policies; public services; hydrology and water quality; geology and seismicity; biological resources; cultural resources, and other issues. The DEIR also evaluated cumulative effects, growth inducement and alternatives to the proposed update. The only Class I impact (significant, unavoidable) was in the area of air quality. All other impacts could be reduced to a less than significant. A FEIR will be made available to the Planning Commission on July 13, 2006.

STAFF COMMENT

Please bring your copy of the March 2006 Planning Commission Hearing Draft PRE and the Draft EIR to the Planning Commission meeting of July 13, 2006. This was previously provided to your Commission under separate cover. Members of the public may obtain a copy of the 2006 Draft PRE and Draft EIR by viewing Parks' web page (www.slocountyparks.org) or by requesting a fee CD (call County Parks at 805-781-5200).

ATTACHMENTS

Exhibit A: Proposed Changes to the Planning Commission Public Hearing Draft PRE July 13, 2006

Table 1: 2006 PRE Organization and Intent (Chapters 1 through 7)

Table 2: 2006 PRE Organization and Intent (Appendices A through F)

EXHIBIT A

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT PRE JULY 13, 2006

Throughout PRE

1. Change the reference from *Appendix A Project List* to *Chapter 8 Project List*

CHAPTER 1 - Introduction

CHAPTER 2 - Parks

1. Goal 2, Correct as follows: *Recreation that serves the County's residents and visitors of various age groups, varying economic situations, and physical abilities.*

CHAPTER 3 - Recreation

CHAPTER 4 - Special Places and Uses

CHAPTER 5 - Choosing Parks and Recreation

1. Add a policy 5.5 as follows: *The Parks and Recreation Commission may make minor additions to the Project List (Chapter 8), with the understanding that the ultimate approval and funding for a project resides with the Board of Supervisors. Deletions from the Project List can only be made by the Board of Supervisors.*

CHAPTER 6 - Funding & Maintenance

CHAPTER 7 - Definitions

CHAPTER 8 - PROJECT LIST

1. Create.
2. Provide an introduction to this chapter.
3. Provide the following wording to the beginning of new Chapter 8: *The Project List, as provided in this chapter, is the County's official list of park and recreation proposals. This list will need to be updated from time to time. The Parks and Recreation Commission may make minor additions to the Project List, with the understanding that the ultimate approval and funding for a project resides with the Board of Supervisors. Deletions from the Project List can only be made by the Board of Supervisors. This insures that the most important park and recreation decisions are made at the highest level.*

APPENDIX A - Project List

1. Move the Project List to Chapter 8. Renumber the appendices accordingly.

APPENDIX B - California Recreational Use Statute

APPENDIX C - Trail Standards

APPENDIX D - Funding Sources

APPENDIX E - Capital Project Rating Criteria for San Luis Obispo County Parks

APPENDIX F - Consolidated Goals, Objectives and Policies

1. Goal 2, Correct as follows: *Recreation that serves the County's residents and visitors of various age groups, varying economic situations, and physical abilities.*

Table 1
2006 PRE Organization and Intent
Chapters 1 through 7

Chapter #/ Pages	Title	Goal & Intent	Fundamental Issues
1 pages 1-6	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Acknowledge the importance of parks and recreation. ■ History of SLO County Parks as an agency. ■ The Vision ■ Information regarding what a Parks and Recreation Element is and how it was created. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Element background. 2 pages 7-20 <u>Parks Goal 1: An equitable and quality park system within San Luis Obispo County.</u> ◆ The value and benefits of parks. ◆ History of parks (general) ◆ Types of parks and their role. ◆ SLO County's existing resources. ◆ How park needs are determined. ◆ Park goals, objectives, and policies. ◆ The different types of parks. This is important since each park plays a role in a town or a community. There is an important difference between a neighborhood park, a community park, and a regional park. Each type of park tends to fill a different recreation need. ◆ Most SLO County neighborhood and community parks are undersized if compared to the National Recreation and Park Association standards. ◆ Parkland obtained by the County will have an impact on the type of recreation provided. ◆ Emphasizing larger versus smaller parks.
3 pages 21 -29	Recreation	<p><u>Goal 2: Recreation that serves the County's residents and visitors, various age groups, varying economic situations and physical abilities.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The value and benefits of recreation. ■ The difference between "passive" and "active" recreation. ■ Recreation offered by SLO County (i.e., recreation within parks, recreation programming, golf, trails, recreation in natural areas, and opportunities for joint use agreements). ■ How recreation needs are determined. ■ How recreation is provided. ■ Recreation goals, objectives, and policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Trail policies. This section was changed to clearly indicate County Parks does not pursue eminent domain (see Policy 3.11). ◆ Trail Policies. Policy 3.12 was clarified to indicate when land zoned agriculture would be required to provide a trail. Basically, a trail would only be required on lands zone agriculture: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. With a general plan change to a none-ag land use designation, 2. With a discretionary permit that converts agricultural land or a portion of the land to uses not for or related to the production of food or fiber, 3. With a cluster subdivision of more than four parcels, and/or 4. With the creation of a specific plan or new town.

4-8

4-9

Table 1 (Continued) 2006 PRE Organization and Intent Chapters 1 through 7			
Chapter #/ Pages	Title	Goal & Intent	Fundamental Issues
4 pages 30 -32	Special Places and Uses	<p><u>Goal 3: Maintain and augment access to and along the coast.</u></p> <p><u>Goal 4: Natural areas preserved within the County that protect unique and sensitive resources.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Defines special places as historic facilities, coastal access, and natural areas. ■ Defines these items in terms of SLO County Parks. For example, County Parks provides historic places such as the Rios Caledonia Adobe. In addition, County Parks obtains and maintains the County's coastal accessways and many Natural Areas. ■ Makes a distinction between "parks" and "natural areas". ■ Special Places goals, objectives, and policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ For the purpose of this Element, Natural Areas are not the same as parks. The primary purpose of a Natural Area is to provide habitat or resource protection with possibly a secondary goal of public access. The primary goal of a park is to provide recreation. ◆ Natural areas do not provide neighborhood or community parkland. These are different animals. ◆ Coastal Access is mentioned in the PRE but it is covered in the various coastal Area Plans. ◆ The Coastal Trail is included in the PRE.
5 pages 34-37	Choosing Parks & Recreation	<p><u>Goal 5: An equitable and realistic park, recreation, natural area, and coastal access project list.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Defines a decision process so all projects get equal consideration. ■ Defines the Parks and Recreation Commission's role. ■ Defines how projects will be evaluated. ■ Choosing Parks & Recreation goals, objectives, and policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Methodology.
6 pages 38-44	Funding & Maintenance	<p><u>Goal 6: A variety of funding sources to expand, acquire, develop, and maintain the County's parks, recreation opportunities and natural areas.</u></p> <p><u>Goal 7: High quality park maintenance that is cost effective and environmentally sensitive.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Discusses how County Parks funds acquisition, development and maintenance. ■ Discusses funding problems. ■ Discusses potential solutions. ■ Funding & Maintenance goals, objectives, and policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Funding priorities. This tends to go back to the decision tree and potentially giving preference to regional facilities and/or cost recovery facilities versus items such as pocket or neighborhood park.
7 pages 46 -49	Definitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide definitions for park, recreation, and natural area terms used in the Element. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Clarifies terms.

4-10

<p>Table 2 2006 PRE Organization and Intent Appendices A through F</p>			
Appendix / Pages	Title	Intent	Fundamental Issues
A pages A-1 to A-36	Project List	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide a list of existing public facilities (to the extent feasible) within SLO County. ■ Provide a list of proposed park, recreation and natural area projects. ■ Emphasize joint use opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Trails through agricultural lands. See trails designated for removal.
B pages B-1 to B-4	California Recreational Use Statute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Clarify liability issues associated with public use of private trails, parks, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Informational.
C pages C-1 to C-19	Trail Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Discusses County trail standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provides various guidelines for various situations.
D pages D-1 to D-3	Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Discusses funding sources typical to parks, recreation and natural area projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Informational.
E pages E-1 to E-2	Capital Project Rating Criteria for SLO County Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provides a format for rating capital improvement projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Currently used by Parks and the Parks and Recreation Commission to rate projects. It is updated as needed.
F pages F-1 to F-9	Consolidated Goals, Objectives and Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provides a summary of Park's Mission Statement, the Vision, and goals, objectives, and policies contained in the Element. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ This is a summary. Individual issues are addressed in individual chapters.